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## The American Institute of Sacred Literature

### A PROFESSIONAL READING COURSE ON THE EFFICIENT CHURCH

*The church has always been better than its age. For this reason it has made the age better. But in its very success lies its danger. It may rest content with its success rather than learn lessons for even greater success. Any social institution that does not minister to the forces that are transforming a civilization will be outgrown. The church with all its success in the past is no exception to this rule; it must be efficient or be outgrown. This duty it is seeing anew. We are dealing with an awakened, not a moribund, institution.*

*The Professional Reading Guild course in "THE EFFICIENT CHURCH" will be conducted by PROFESSOR SHAILER MATHEWS, Dean of the Divinity School of The University of Chicago. Questions for consideration should be addressed to the Editors of the BIBLICAL WORLD; inquiries concerning books and traveling libraries to the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE.*

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Church efficiency is different from the efficiency of church members. Individual Christians may be engaged in a vast number of enterprises looking to the benefit of the individual or the social order; they may be working in and supporting charity organizations, schools and colleges, social settlements, and the countless other organizations which are engaged in making our world a better place in which to live: but their efficiency is not necessarily the efficiency of any given church or even of the churches of which they are members. That is an institutional, not an individual, matter. Some of the most vital questions which the religious world faces concern the efficiency of the churches as organizations.

The last few years have abounded in criticism of the church, using that word in the sense of organized Christianity in general. The most sweeping criticism lies in the charge that the church is not in sympathy with the growing spirit of democracy, the claims of labor, and of modern scientific thought. All the ills to which our social order is heir have been laid to its charge. Some of its critics have even gone so far as to insist that it is moribund and fortunately so. Christianity they believe will continue, but the church as an institution will disappear. No one need doubt the sincerity of these critics, but there is a fair question as

to the wisdom of their criticism. Any organization adapts itself to new conditions slowly. Protestantism, in the very nature of the case, cannot be ruled from above; it can respond to a changing order only in accordance with the great laws governing change in a democracy, and such change naturally comes slowly. But any person who is really acquainted with any considerable number of churches distributed over a wide territory is impressed with the remarkable awakening in church life. Thanks to the criticism to which it has been subjected. Protestantism is vastly more alive to the needs of the hour than it was fifty years ago. A sane ecclesiastical enthusiasm is developing. We are coming to see that the church has a mission which has not been usurped by any other institution. Despite their mistakes, despite their reactional tendencies, despite their creeds the Protestant churches of America are awakening to a new sense of their duty and a new ambition to be of service.

This new attitude of the church forces upon us the question of efficiency. We have had many so-called inspirational movements, but we have not very successfully made their enthusiasm contribute to the efficiency of the churches. As a matter of fact, mere enthusiasm may be as dangerous as helpful. It must be institutionalized if it is to have results, and the institution in which it is put to work must have a definite conception of its function and an effective plan of organization. It is not enough for individual Christians to adopt modern methods; each church itself as an institution must adopt such methods.

What this series of studies of books bearing upon the efficiency of church plans seeks to accomplish is very simple. We shall compare and estimate various plans which have been set forth as means of assisting the church to accomplish the results for which it was intended. Therein we hope to discover what is true church efficiency, namely, the actual accomplishment of the ends, both primary and secondary, for which the church is intended.

It goes without saying that our study presupposes that the church has a function in our modern life. But just what is that function? Certainly not to do everything that must be done. A jack of all trades will be master of none, whether he be an individual or an organization. In an undeveloped community a church may have to do more things than in a highly organized group. In some communities the church is engaged in performing tasks that the community ought to be performing. What shall we think of a community, for instance, that does nothing for the care of the poor, provides no hospital for contagious diseases, even does not maintain public schools? The fact that such a

condition, so repellent to our modern conception of citizenship, does exist compels a church to take up work which the community ought better to do. Such a church is efficient. But it by no means follows that in a community properly administered and supplied with the necessary institutions a church should undertake to do the same tasks. A church cannot be efficient in terms of mere organization; it can only be efficient in terms of function.

What, then, is the aim of the church? For what does it actually exist? What function does it perform which nothing else performs?

These are questions which the church must answer before it can really undertake to be efficient, for efficiency always consists in the performance of a function with the least possible waste of effort.

It is not our purpose to discuss this in detail, but rather to let the various volumes suggested for reading speak for themselves. At the same time, as a point of view for discussion, it is well to formulate briefly what we may accept as the real function of the church.

First, we may say that it is the development to the utmost possibility of the spiritual personality in every Godward and manward relation. Such a view as this centers upon the ultimate aim of religion, which is the production of personality made free by proper adjustment of itself to the personal environment of God and man. From such a point of view civilization may be either a help or a hindrance to the church. A civilization, for instance, which magnifies the worth of the individual and endeavors to assist his growth by the establishment of proper agencies providing for his spiritual development will be an assistance to religion. A civilization like that of the Roman Empire in certain stages of its development and to some extent like that of our own day, which centers attention upon the physical aspects of life making supreme material good, pleasure, and force, belittling virtues like honor, purity, and honesty, is the enemy of religion. The function of the church is one of co-operation with the great forces making toward the development of free personalities and on the one side the uncompromising hostility to forces belittling the supreme worth of the spiritual person. If a church, for instance, should come to believe that its sole object was the entertaining of people to keep them occupied so that they will not be led into evil paths, it would fall short of fulfilling its functions. The duty of the church may be to furnish such sort of activity so that Satan may not find employment for idle hands, but if it does not oppose evil it is inefficient, in that it is not fulfilling its real function. For it is not assisting the development of the full worth of personality.

Second, from another point of view, the function of the church may be said to be the socializing of the gospel; that is to say it must undertake to make individuals Christian as the best way in which to bring them to a realization of their possibilities as free persons, and at the same time it must seek to evangelize the constructive forces of society in order that society itself may be an aid rather than a hindrance to the Christian life, using that term in its noblest and least theological sense.

As a means of fulfilling these functions churches must center attention upon the operation of their various agencies. The same is true in the case of educational institutions. However high may be the ultimate function of a public school, its efficiency will be judged, not in terms of generalizations, but in its capacity actually to prepare its pupils for the next educational step. From this point of view its various operations will be estimated. Similarly in the case of a church. Not only must it deliberately set about accomplishing its supreme purpose, but it must just as deliberately see to it that the various agencies employed co-operate to that purpose efficiently. Thus its task becomes concrete as well as deeply spiritual. Its efficiency will largely consist in the degree to which its various agencies are adapted to accomplish these secondary functions which in turn will minister to the primary aim of real religion.

As a result of this conception we may say that church efficiency in general involves: organization in accordance with its function and aim; organization for religious education; organization for social service; organization for extension in the home field; and organization for extension in the foreign field. Such a conception of efficiency is clearly very general, but the discussion of each one of these topics should suggest helpful details, and it must be from this point of view that we approach the volumes that are to be considered.

The list of books which have been chosen comprise those in most cases which are relatively new. The changing social order is constantly demanding conceptions and methods in church work which make books that were in a sense epoch-making ten years ago out of date today. There are many books that might have been added to the list and some of them will be found mentioned in the discussion. Those which have been chosen on the whole seem to present different aspects of their general topic most satisfactorily and are mutually supplementary.

#### I. ORGANIZATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS FUNCTION AND AIM.

*The Christian Pastor in the New Age*—Lyman.

*The Function of the Church in Modern Society*—Tucker.

*The Building of the Church*—Jefferson.

*Scientific Management in the Churches*—Mathews.

## II. ORGANIZATION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

*The Educational Ideal in the Ministry*—Faunce.  
*Pedagogical Bible School*—Haslett.  
*The Modern Sunday School in Principle and Practice*—Cope.

## III. ORGANIZATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE.

*A Reasonable Social Policy for Christian People*—Henderson.  
*The Country Church and the Rural Problem*—Butterfield.  
*The Church of the Open Country*—Wilson.  
*The Administration of an Institutional Church*—Rainsford.  
*The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*—Addams.

## IV. ORGANIZATION FOR EXTENSION IN THE HOME FIELD.

*Educational Evangelism*—McKinley.  
*Principles of Successful Church Advertising*—Stelze.  
*Aliens or Americans*—Grosse.  
*The Redemption of the City*—Sears.  
*Missions Striking Home*—McAfee.

## V. ORGANIZATION FOR EXTENSION IN THE FOREIGN FIELD.

*Christianity and the Nations*—Speer.  
*The Home Base of Missions* (Vol. VI); *Co-operation and Unity* (Vol. VIII)—“World Missionary Conference Reports,” 1910.  
*Missions from the Modern Point of View*—Carver.

## I. THE FIRST ELEMENT OF CHURCH EFFICIENCY: ORGANIZATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS FUNCTION AND AIM

The books selected for study in this first division deal with the church as a whole and with the business of the pastor as the leader of the church. Logically the first to be considered is that by William Jewett Tucker, former president of Dartmouth, *The Function of the Church in Modern Society*. Dr. Tucker's work is written from the point of view of a trained sociologist. One might describe it as a philosophical vindication of the right of the church to exist. It falls into two parts, the Ministry of Spiritual Authority and the Ministry of Human Sympathy. This twofold division admirably expresses the co-ordination of the great purposes that are involved in the church's primary function of the furtherance of the personal or spiritual life. In discussing the first point Dr. Tucker naturally begins with the contrast between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. His treatment here is brief but fundamental. It opens up the great issues which we are in constant danger of overlooking whenever we center attention upon efficiency. Strictly speaking there are only two types of authority; the one, that of the institution, and the other, that of spiritual sympathy with truth. The Roman Catholic church represents the former, Protestantism professedly

the latter. The two cannot well be confused. To attempt to make Protestantism a religion of authority is to destroy Protestantism.

The assurance of faith, however, must to a certain extent vary in different ages. At the present time faith is gaining from the changes in the apprehension of religious truth. Thus the Bible stands upon a surer basis after it has withstood successfully the severe examination of criticism. "A Bible set free from the last bondage to literalism, no longer the bulwark of divisive ecclesiastical dogmas, but now become the simple and natural vehicle for the supreme revelation of God to men, has already begun its great constructive work in the church, of which the chief sign is the growing concentration of faith among Christian believers."

Similarly there is developing a new authority of the spiritual. The church is realizing its function of spreading spiritual authority, and this, as Dr. Tucker very well says, is "not of improvable quality, judged by any known ethical or spiritual standards." Of course the personality of Christ is a central thought for the work of the church, and here, again, the church has one of its great duties, namely, that of so widening its conception of Jesus' own ideals and personality that he becomes the supreme authority, not in any legal, but in an inspirational, fashion.

But the work of the church is only partially done when it brings religious faith to express and establish authority. It must also develop profound human sympathy. Here it finds its rival in the socialistic movement. Both may be said to be competing for the great unclassified army of working-men who are neither socialists nor trade-unionists. There is no sufficient excuse for the church's loss of influence with this mass of working people. Their reclamation lies with the business laymen of the church. Such men must be made to see the moral significance of the economic process and be made above all to see that the "game of the street" is no longer money-making, but that "the whole game includes right and *rights*—honesty and humanity." Human sympathy must be extended not only to the labor movement at home, but to the entire world, and thus the function of the church reaches from the spiritual authority in individual life to the extension of Christian love to the race.

It would be difficult to find in the same compass a more compact and pregnant presentation of the function of the church. No church can be efficient that does not deliberately undertake to fulfil its double duty of bringing the world under the sway of spiritual ideals and values and of training its members in the development of Christian love.

The volume entitled *The Christian Pastor in the New Age*, by Dr. Albert J. Lyman, is the work of one of the great pastors of our age, who

for nearly forty years has been the leader of the South Congregational Church, Brooklyn. The volume consists of a series of five lectures given before the Bangor Theological School and might be described as a veteran's advice to his younger comrades. The five lectures deal with: the pastoral spirit; the pastor as comrade and counselor; the pastor as spiritual sponsor and social mediator; the pastor as parish organizer and leader; the pastor as preacher. The list of topics has in itself indications of the emphasis which should be laid upon pastoral training. Dr. Lyman is not so much concerned with the duties of the church in themselves as with the duties of the minister as the leader of the church. He emphasizes particularly the personal pastoral work. He does discuss what he calls "social mediation" in the individual, the home, and the community, but his interests are not primarily social. But if an efficient church demands a ministry which is something more than exhortation or preaching, this volume by Dr. Lyman will bear study. After all, efficiency in the church runs back largely to the temper of the minister who serves the church, and one cannot fail to believe that a church shepherded by a man with the temper and the ambition which Dr. Lyman emphasizes will be a great power in a community.

A markedly different yet a book that admirably complements the two preceding is that by the well-known pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle, Charles E. Jefferson, on *The Building of the Church*, and constitutes one series of the Lyman Beecher lectures given at Yale. To Dr. Jefferson the great call of the church is construction. The following paragraph will give his point of view distinctly:

Another outstanding phenomenon of our age is the shortening of pastorates. This is due in part to hazy conceptions of the preacher's supreme work. If a man thinks his mission in the world is the delivering of sermons, he is likely to want to pass from parish to parish, staying only long enough in each pulpit to exhaust his sermonic stock. Such a man is a sermonizer, but not a church-builder. He has been trained to write sermons, but not in the art of church-building. He does not know what the supreme work of a minister of Christ is. He does not know what preaching is for. His knowledge does not run beyond the A B C's of his calling. He thinks of himself as a man whose sole business is to convert sinners. Having persuaded sinners to say they want to follow Christ, and having induced them to unite with the church, his labor, he thinks, is ended. It does not occur to him that the most difficult part of a minister's work is with the people after they have joined the church. The minister is a teacher, and a teacher's real work begins only after pupils are enrolled. He is the general of an army, and a general's critical task is drilling his men after they have enlisted, and massing them in such ways as to conquer

the foe. He is a master-builder, and his task is not simply collecting material, but shaping it into a structure which shall become a shrine of the Eternal. The crowning and crucial work of a minister is not conversion, but church-building.

The advantage of Dr. Jefferson's treatment is that it centers the minister's attention upon the church rather than upon the various social undertakings in which the minister might naturally be involved. And this is most important. The time has come when we need less criticism of the church and more positive advice as to how the church is to be built up. It is too much the fashion to magnify the weakness of the church rather than its possibilities. Dr. Jefferson's volume is a splendid tonic in this regard. What is even better, he points out in a singularly effective fashion some of the forces which actually go into church-building which a less experienced man would be tempted to overlook. His chapter upon "Building Moods and Temper" is a splendid piece of psychological study. Too many reformers are indifferent to the fact that reform is not built upon information but inspiration. Dr. Jefferson recognizes the value of worship, music, and the development of reverential moods, putting emphasis even upon careful preparation for prayer. Indeed, one chief feature of the volume is its recognition of the genuine spiritual element in all church work. An efficient church, as Dr. Jefferson shows, must rest ultimately upon the quality of the life of its members, and religion must be dominant above all other qualities. The hum of ecclesiastical machinery gives a semblance of efficiency, but it may be without influence or significance. Dr. Jefferson's volume is an antidote for the easy generalization that all the needs of the church can be summed up in the words, "business management." Nothing could be farther from the truth. That church which does not possess the deep religious experience which Dr. Jefferson emphasizes will never be truly efficient, no matter how many clubs it may possess.

The final volume here recommended is hardly more than an essay on the application of the principles of scientific management in a church. The present writer feels a certain degree of hesitation in calling attention to his own volume, but the essay covers a field of interest which, so far as he knows, is not otherwise treated. The closest approach to it is the chapter on the church in Allen's *Efficient Democracy*. The main purpose of the book is stated in its title, to apply the general principles as organized in the new profession of scientific management to the church itself. The danger in such an attempt is obviously and precisely that which the volume of Dr. Jefferson is calculated to offset, but there

is no reason why there should be any incongruity between real religion and proper methods of religious work. It is these methods that this little book undertakes to set forth in a suggestive rather than final form.

Thus in these four volumes we have discussions covering in a broad way the general topic of organization in accordance with function. The one described the function of the church in general; the second showed how the pastor can care for individual church members; the third emphasized the constructive spirit that church efficiency presupposes; and the fourth suggested rather specific methods and lines of organization on the basis of successful business.

Other volumes that may well be read are: Gladden, *The Christian Pastor*; Black, *Building a Working Church*; Paradise, *The Church and the Individual*; Mathews, *The Church and the Changing Order*.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Draw a diagram illustrating a method—not too elaborate—for the efficient organization of a church of three hundred members.
2. What seems to be the most immediate duty of the (local) church to which you belong?
3. Should Young People's Societies be treated as integral parts of a given church? If so, how can their work be correlated with the work of the church as a whole?
4. Which would tend to the greater efficiency, a long pastorate or a number of short pastorates covering the same period?

(Note: In discussing this question it would be well to recall the practice of the great Methodist churches of the North and the South, as well as the difference between their methods of settling pastors and those of churches with congregational polities.)

5. What seems to be the tendency in congregational bodies (like the Baptists, Congregationalists, and Disciples) regarding centralization?
6. Would a pension system for pastors tend to increase the efficiency of churches?
7. What seems to you to be the greatest enemy of church efficiency?
8. Formulate exactly what should be the ideals of a really efficient church.